ED 338 475 RC 018 398

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TITLE Providing Transition Planning for the Secondary Student through the Community Based Inservice Model.
PUB DATE 90
NOTE 6p.; Paper presented at the Rural Education Symposium of the American Council on Rural Special Education and the National Rural and Small Schools Consortium (Tucson, AZ, March 18-23, 1990).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS *Agency Cooperation; Community Programs; Daily Living Skills; *Independent Living; *Inservice Teacher Education; Interdisciplinary Approach; *Job Training; Secondary Education; *Secondary School Students; Special Education; Special Needs Students; *Transitional Programs
IDENTIFIERS *Individualized Transition Plans

ABSTRACT

This paper provides an overview of the transition process for students with severe handicaps. For secondary age youths with severe handicaps, explicit and intensive transition planning is necessary to bridge the gap between school experiences and adult life. The transition planning process is designed to build the skills necessary for an individual to function competently in the community and to establish support services necessary to ensure that participation is maximized and maintained over time. The focal point of the transition process is the development of a formal individualized transition plan (ITP) for every student with handicaps. The ITP must begin before placement in the community occurs. With the transition team effort, the ITP identifies adult residential and employment goals, and support services needed to maximize independence in the community. The Community Based Inservice Model (CBIM) is a federally funded project that is designed to provide training to educators to assist the transition of youth with moderate to severe handicaps. The CBIM offers training opportunities in transition planning, community based activities, and the placement of students in community jobs. The vocational component features community jobs at integrated job sites, on-site job training, and a variety of job experiences. The community based component teaches skills such as shopping, laundry, and banking in the community where the skills will be used. (KS)

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ED388475

Providing Transition Planning for the Secondary Student Through The Community Based Inservice Model

Much has been written during the last decade emphasizing the importance of providing transition planning and services to students with severe handicaps. Without a systematic process of planning and programming students with severe handicaps have a difficult time making the transition from the school setting to community services and activities and jobs in the community (Everson & Moon, 1987). If persons with severe handicaps are to live productive, meaningful lives in the community it is vital that they be prepared to meet the demands of community living. It is imperative that this preparation begin well before placement in the community occurs. Transition planning provides a vehicle for this preparatory process.

The purpose of this paper is to provide the reader with an overview of the transition process and the role of the Individualized Transition Plan (ITP) in this process. In addition, this paper will discuss federally funded inservice project, the Community Based Inservice Model, that offers training opportunities in transition planning, the identification and development of community based activities, and placement of students in community jobs.

The Transition Process

Over the past decade the transition of persons with severe handicaps from secondary school programs to adult services has become the focus of attention of educators (McDonnell & Hardman, 1985; Brown & Nisbet, 1983; Conway, 1986; Everson & Moon, 1987; Horner & Meyer, 1986), service providers (Ashby & Bensberg, 1981; Baumgart & Van Welleghem, 1986), government agencies (Will, 1984; Razeghi, 1986; Kusseron, 1984) and parents (Conway, 1986; Goodall & Bruder, 1986; Olson & McCubbin, 1984; Everson & Moon, 1987).

Increasing attention has arisen from concerns about the transition process (or the lack of a process) and the transition years. The U. S. Department of Education Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services has made transition a major priority at the national level (Will,1984). Despite the directives and support from the federal level, many state and local communities have no established procedures for transition planning between school and adult service agencies (McDonnell & Wilcox, 1985). Without established procedures and coordinated efforts at the state and local level there is a high likelihood of duplication or interruption of service provisions.

For secondary age youths with severe handicaps, explicit and intensive transition planning is necessary to bridge the gap between school experiences and adult life. According to McDonnell & Hardman (1985) the transition planning process is designed to build the skills necessary for an individual to function competently in the community, while at the same time establishing the support services necessary to ensure that participation is maximized and maintained over time.

The transition process can be viewed as formal, systematic means of planning and programming that allows the student, their parents and service providers to

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develop a network of activities and services that will ensure a high quality of life in the community for the student following high school (McDonnell & Hardman, 1985). It is important that transition be viewed as an ongoing process, not something that is discussed or considered only during the final year of the school program.

The Individualized Transition Plan

The focal point of the transition process is the development of a formal individualized transition plan (ITP) for every student with handicaps. The ITP is designed to facilitate a smooth transition from the secondary program into the community and work force. The ITP identifies adult residential and employment goals, and support services and should include annual goals and short termed objectives that reflect skills required to function on the job, at home and in the community. The systematic interdisciplinary plan should address the issues of employment, community living options, guardianship, independent living skills and income support as well as to designate the person/agency responsible to provide the needed training and/or services.

Transition planning and preparation for life in the community must begin well before placement in the community occurs. Wehman & Moon (1988) recommend that the plan should be first developed 4 years prior to an individual's graduation with modification of the plan occurring at least once a year until the individual has successfully adjusted to the post school placement. Others (Rusch & DeStefano, 1989) suggest that transition planning begin as early as seventh grade.

The transition plan is usually developed by an ITP team. The team consists of an interagency group of professionals from various disciplines who are currently providing educational services or who are targeted to provide adult services. Members of the team might include the targeted youth and their parents or guardian, school personnel (special education teacher, vocational teacher, occupational and physical therapists) and adult service providers (case manger, vocational rehabilitation counselor, representatives from residential and vocational options).

The ITP is required by state law in some areas (Florida, Illinois, Massachusetts) while some local districts in other states require or recommend a separate ITP. However, currently the majority of agencies include transition planning as part of the required IEP. It should be noted that the ITP differs from the IEP in that the ITP identifies outcomes and support services rather than skill deficits and recommended strategies. When transition planning and IEP goals are discussed at the same meeting, transition planning issues should be discussed first so IEP goals and objectives can be written to support the targeted outcomes.

Transition Planning and the Community Based Inservice Model

Rusch & DeStefano (1989) surveyed over 200 model program applications for federal funding to improve education and employment programs throughout the county resulting in a listing of ten characteristic strategies that these model programs appear to be implementing in an effort to influence the successful transition of young adults with disabilities from school to work. Among the characteristic identified were: transition planning is began well in advance of graduation; a transition team is formed which develops the ITP; secondary programs focus on integration and especially on integrated employment; training

includes relevant living skills referenced to the local community; basic, necessary living skills are taught in real employment, community and residential settings; students are placed in real jobs that provide opportunities for employee advancement. While these components were identified from model programs, few of these models offer the capacity to train others in their methodology. To fill this void the Community Based Inservice Model (CBIM) was developed.

The CBIM, a cooperative effort between Teaching Research and the Yamhill County Education Service District, is a federally funded project that is designed to provide training to educators to assist the transition of youths with moderate to severe handicaps from the school program to adult services and life in the community. The inservice training project is targeted to meet the needs of teachers, assistant teachers, vocational trainers and administrators serving secondary age students.

Inservice training is available for personnel who desire training in a comprehensive model that incorporates currently accepted best practices in the areas of vocational training and community based instruction. In addition, for those needing technical assistance in a single component, component training is available.

The CBIM offers training opportunities in transition planning, community based activities and the placement of students in community jobs. One major component of the CBIM is the emphasis on providing vocational training and job placement in the community. The vocational component, including training in associated workskills, lays the groundwork for educators to place students at paid integrated job sites with workers who are not handicapped. This is in line with the shift away from activity centers and sheltered workshops to supported employment in the competitive job market. The model features community jobs at integrated job sites, on site job training, a variety of job experiences, non paid work experience to paid employment, associated work skills training and the utilization of co-workers, peer tutors and volunteers.

A second aspect of the CBIM involves a strong community based component. Skills necessary for successful transition to community life such as the appropriate use of recreation, shopping, laundry, banking and eating establishments are taught in the community where the skills will be used. The community based portion of the model emphasizes instruction in the least restrictive environment; age appropriate, functional activities; community referenced instruction; programming for future environments; a comprehensive curriculum, transition planning as well as parental involvement.

Training sessions in the CBIM are available from October through May. Training consists of a four day practicum based experience in a demonstration/training classroom as well as in the community and at job sites. The majority of the training costs are covered as part of the grant. The only cost to the trainee is for transportation, plus meals and lodging at the training site at McMinnville, Oregon. All training materials are included as is one follow-up/technical assistance visit to the trainees site at no cost.

Component training is available October through May and during the summer months. Each one day session concentrates on one component of the model. Training may be conducted at the demonstration classroom or at the trainee's site.

Summary

The smooth transition of students with severe handicaps from the school setting to life in the community requires a planned, systematic process. This process must be in place well before the student graduates from the school program. The focal point of the transition process is the development of a formal individualized transition plan (ITP). The ITP identifies adult residential and employment goals as well as support services needed to maximize independence in the community. While the student is still in the school program it is vital that they receive training in community based activities and vocational preparation.

In this paper the reader was provided with an overview of the transition process and the role of the ITP in this process. In addition, this paper discussed a federally funded inservice project, the Community Based Inservice Model, that offers training opportunities in transition planning, the identification and development of community based activities, and placement of students in community jobs.

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